



"Fair speech may hide a foul heart."  
—J.R.R. Tolkien

13-Apr-07

## *Apologies and Hypocrisy*

Over the past week or so, we have witnessed several examples of a consequence of present-day America's inclusive, diverse, multicultural society. Perhaps we should call our time the "Age of Apology," as it appears that everyone has something to apologize to someone else for. It is as if we are all sitting at the hot-seat end of Oprah Winfrey's couch, sweating under the intense glare of the lights and forced by media scrutiny and public disapproval to confess our trespasses against those we have wronged.

Call Dr. Phil! We need to talk this out.

The apostle Paul writes in [Romans 3:10](#), quoting [Psalm 14:1](#), "There is none righteous, no not one." A few verses later, he paraphrases [Psalm 5:9](#), "Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit" ([Romans 3:13](#)). His accusations are just—human beings as a whole and as individuals are guilty as charged. James writes in his epistle, "For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. . . . But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison" ([James 3:2](#), 8). He concludes, "Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so" (verse 10). Offensive speech is unjustified.

However, under America's founding principles, offensive speech is protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution: "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press. . . ." Essentially, the Founders severely limited the

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government's ability to censor speech, writing, or activity that expresses contrarian views. They depended on the overall morality of society to keep such expressions within decent, ethical parameters. A quick look at modern American culture exposes their Pollyannaish trust in the innate [goodness](#) of their fellow man.

In a way, then, the public outcry over Don Imus' thoughtless and demeaning "joke" at the expense of the Rutgers women's basketball players fills the role that the Founders hoped would help to rein in offensive speech. Yet, unfortunately, this view is a bit simplistic. Imus is reaping what he sowed, surely, but others who regularly say far worse things—and ultimately far more damaging things—about black women receive a free pass.

As Michelle Malkin has chronicled in a recent [column](#) (*\*offensive language warning\**), top-selling rap "artists" verbally abuse black women in their crude, hateful lyrics. Rapper Snoop Dog, a man with an extensive rap sheet of his own, claims that the double standard is warranted:

It's a completely different scenario. [Rappers] are not talking about no collegiate basketball girls who have made it to the next level in education and sports. We're talking about [women] that's in the 'hood that ain't doing [anything], that's trying to get a [black man] for his money. These are two separate things. . . . We are rappers that have these songs coming from our minds and our souls that are relevant to what we feel.

In his illogic, Snoop Dog thinks it is entirely justified to demean young black women in song after song, accompanied by memorable lyrics and a catchy beat because rappers see women as money-grubbing opportunists and because it is "relevant" to the artists' feelings. How this affects the attitudes, self-perceptions, and aspirations of both young black men and women never enters the equation. Yet, if a white man imitates the same "urban" phrases in a foolish attempt at humor, he should be at least publicly excoriated, deprived of employment, and perhaps sued and stifled for the rest of his natural life—and perhaps beyond. While what Imus did is wrong, what the rappers do in hit after hit is pure evil. It is indefensible as "real," as art, as culture, as anything.

Amidst this farce, another major apology became news when Durham, North Carolina, District Attorney Mike Nifong apologized to the three Duke lacrosse players whom he accused of raping a hired exotic dancer a year ago. Nifong, a liberal Democrat running for reelection at the time, made this a high-profile case even though the early evidence cast serious doubt on the accuser's story. Meanwhile, the three young men—though

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certainly not saints, by any means—were exposed to intimidation (by the Black Panthers), calls for their castration (by feminists at Duke), calls for their expulsion (by a cabal of Duke professors), and general defamation of character (by too many to list). Jesse Jackson, ever eager to denounce racism and capture another fifteen minutes of fame, embroiled himself in the controversy, promising to pay for the accuser's college education.

The lacrosse players lead defense attorney, Joe Cheshire said that Nifong "appealed to the racial divide" and "so-called community activists" agitated the public into a frenzy despite a lack of evidence. "Both sides, white and black, need to turn themselves away from community activists and [those] who see race in everything, . . . [who] see hate. Everything is not racial, everything is not class, . . . everything is not politically correct." On the strength of this concerted agitation, Nifong was reelected—beating a law-and-order black Republican!—and continued his prosecution of the Duke student-athletes.

It is no wonder that they do not accept Nifong's apology as genuine. In their eyes, he is merely trying to save his own bacon and salvage what he can of his professional reputation. He faces almost certain disbarment by the NC State Bar Association, which took the unprecedented action of instigating the procedure itself (normally, it is petitioned by others). It is unlikely to rule against its own ethics violations charges.

And where are the apologies of the Black Panthers, the Duke feminists and teachers, and Jesse Jackson? Where are the apologies of the media outlets who hounded these young men for months? Where is the apology of the false accuser? The air surrounding this travesty of justice contains more than a whiff of hypocrisy. Only *certain* ones have to apologize, and even then, it is insincere and self-serving. Today, a public apology is meaningless, a mere show of contrition.

The ninth commandment ([Exodus 20:16](#)) forbids bearing false witness, and its spirit includes every kind of deception and hypocrisy, however expressed. [Jesus](#) teaches in [Matthew 12:34-37](#):

For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.

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The Lord proclaims in [Hosea 4:1](#), "There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of [God](#) in the land." If we put these scriptures together with the present state of American hypocrisy, we can only reckon that the day of judgment cannot be far off.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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## *From the Archives: Featured Sermon*

### [Civility and Courtesy](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Focusing upon the rising tide of societal incivility, Richard Ritenbaugh warns that discourtesy and ugly in-your-face attitudes (fruits of the flesh) have also manifested themselves in the greater church of God. These disgusting works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21) are exactly the opposite of what God expects of us- the opposite of Agape love. Good manners (minor morals or the small change of virtue) are the fundamentals of love for others and love for God. Unfortunately, good manners and courtesy do not come naturally, but have to be learned and continually practiced. The common denominator of etiquette is to esteem others more and making ourselves less. When we show courtesy to others, we imitate God.

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## *From the Archives: Featured Article*

### [The Ninth Commandment \(1997\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

The Ninth Commandment: You Shall Not Bear False Witness.

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